



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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August 20, 2007

PENNSYLVANIA BULLETIN NO. PA190-7-8

SUBJECT: ECS – Penn Soil RC&D Warm Season Grass Field Day

Purpose. To learn more about establishing warm season grasses, weed control and management as well as the wildlife habitat benefits. In addition, there will be a discussion on the potential for warm season grasses to be used as an energy crop.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2007

In cooperation with the USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, Penn Soil Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council will sponsor a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program information meeting and warm season grass management field day on Monday, August 27, 2007, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Wildflowers Meadow Bed & Breakfast Pavilion.

The seminar will feature a tour of both new and well established warm season grass fields including Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Switchgrass, and Eastern Gamagrass on the Walt Robertson farm, located just off Route 208, three miles north of Shippenville, PA in Clarion County.

NRCS Technical staffs are encouraged to attend.

If you are interested in attending, please obtain approval from your supervisor for attendance and overnight travel if needed. Upon approval, please notify your Administrative Coordinator no later than August 22, 2007. All travel must be approved by the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations. Administrative Coordinators shall send names of those interested in attending to Penn Soil RC&D Office by August 23, 2007.

/s/ CRAIG R. DERICKSON
State Conservationist

Attachments – Agenda and Press Release

DIST: AO

Penn Soil RC&D CREP/Warm Season Grass Field Day
Monday August 27th, 2007

Location: Wildflower Meadows Bed & Breakfast Pavilion
Just off Route 208; 3 miles North of Shippenville, PA (Clarion County)

Agenda

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon

Field tour of both new and well established warm season grass stands including Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Switchgrass, and Eastern Gamagrass. Our host, Walt Robertson will lead a discussion on seeding methods, weed control, establishment, and management of the warm season grasses found on his farm.

12:00 -12:45 Lunch will be provided at the Wildflower Meadows Bed & Breakfast Pavilion by our hosts Walt Robertson and Carol Aaron

12:45 – 1:45 PM Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (status of CREP, new CREP enrollment procedures, any other related information) Bill Foose & Tom Tanner, FSA; Barry Isaacs & Brian Wolfe, NRCS

1:45-2:00 PM Warm Season Grasses as a Potential Energy Crop

Dan Arnett, Ernst Conservation Seeds (Invited, but Not Confirmed yet)

(If Dan or someone from Ernst is not available to participate- Wes Ramsey will fill in and make the presentation on this topic)

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Wes Ramsey
Phone: 814-226-8160 Ext. 119

August 17, 2007

In cooperation with the USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, Penn Soil Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council will sponsor a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program information meeting and warm season grass management field day on Monday August 27th from 10:00 am to 2:00 p.m. at Wildflowers Meadow Bed & Breakfast Pavilion. The seminar will feature a tour of both new and well established warm season grass fields including Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Switchgrass, and Eastern Gamagrass on the Walt Robertson farm, located just off Route 208, three miles north of Shippensburg, PA in Clarion County.

Walt Robertson will lead participants on a tour of the fields and describe seeding methods, establishment, weed control, and management of warm season grass species on his farm during the morning session. The afternoon session will feature a presentation on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to provide information for landowners who may be interested in considering enrolling land into this conservation program which provides economic benefits to landowners who take marginal land from crop production to benefit wildlife and water quality. Also included in the meeting will be a discussion of utilizing warm season grass as an alternative energy crop.

Native, perennial warm-season grasses such as switchgrass and big bluestem grow primarily during the warm part of the summer. They produce well compared to cool-season grasses during the hot and dry weather of July and August, and on soils with low moisture holding capacity, low pH, and low phosphorus levels. Although recognized as a summer component of a pasture system, warm-season grasses can be harvested and stored as hay. Warm season grasses also provide wildlife habitat and conservation benefits and are one of the options for conservation cover in the Conservation Reserve Program. Primary growth of the warm-season grasses is in mid-summer (65-75 percent) and can be used to complement a cool-season grass forage program. Their establishment and management requirements are quite different from cool-season grasses. First-time users must pay special attention to details of managing these grasses.

When managed properly, warm-season grass hay can provide good quality forage, especially for beef cattle. In digestibility trials conducted at Penn State over a three-year period, warm-season grasses were 65 percent digestible and orchardgrass was 68 percent digestible. Two warmseason grasses adapted to Pennsylvania are switchgrass and big bluestem.

The field day is open to anyone who would like to learn more about the planting and management of warm season grasses for conservation, economic, wildlife, and water quality benefits or to learn more about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Lunch will be provided by the hosts. There is no charge to attend; however, you must register in advance by calling the Penn Soil RC&D Office at 814-226-8160 extension 192 or emailing dianna.hendrick@rcdnet.net by August 23, 2007.

Penn Soil RC&D is a 501-C-3 Not for Profit Organization serving the residents of Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, & Warren Counties.

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